

Chickens in Eugene

Raising chickens for food, fun and fertilizer

How to keep
urban chickens
and your neighbors
content with your
local food choices.

Waste Prevention
&
Green Building



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Every spring, feed and farm stores are filled with the chirping of baby chickens. Cute baby chicks are full grown in 5-8 months, producing an egg a day throughout most of their productive years. Knowing where food comes from is becoming a high priority for many Eugene residents interested in fresh local food.



What do you need to know about chicken husbandry, or raising chickens in Eugene? This fact sheet will tell you how to abide by city code while avoiding complaint based nuisance issues, how to keep you and your flock out of harm's way, and how to keep your neighbors content with your backyard food choices.

Eugene residents are increasingly interested in backyard chickens because of the many benefits they provide:

- Knowing where your eggs come from,
- nutritionally superior and better tasting,
- Similar in maintenance to other family pets,
- Free fertilizer and chemical-free pest control,
- Fun and educational backyard entertainment

How many chickens are allowed? Consider that two laying hens will produce close to a dozen eggs a week during peak production.

Eugene Code 9.5250 Farm Animal Standards (I) (a) states: up to 2 adult rabbits or hens (no roosters) over 6 months of age are allowed in any residential zone. Currently, City Council has suspended enforcement of the two hen limitation within this section of the code. No roosters are ever allowed, and initiate the most complaints against chicken owners, so make sure to purchase sexed pullets for the best chance to raise only hens. All other nuisance and zoning code sections still apply.



Sanitation Issues: This same section of code says proper sanitation shall be maintained for all farm animals by not allowing animal waste matter to accumulate, ensure odors are not detectable beyond property lines, and that all animal feed is stored in metal or rodent proof containers. Eugene Code 6.015 Rodent Control-Conditions Attracting Rats Prohibited additionally states that persons in charge of property shall not allow conditions to exist that are likely to attract, feed, or harbor rats or mice.

Fencing and Setbacks: Fences should confine chickens at all times, and all structures that house chickens shall be located at least 25 feet from existing residences (except the owner's) and at least ten feet from interior lot lines.



Helpful hints to keep your flock in compliance with city code.

- 1) Keep a clean coop so manure doesn't build up, chicken feed doesn't attract rodents, and odor doesn't disturb the neighbors.
- 2) Even docile laying hens can squawk loudly to get out of the coop first thing in the morning or after they've just laid an egg. Set the alarm early and let them out before they wake the neighbors.
- 3) Talk to your neighbors; bring them fresh eggs and garden produce, share with them your chicken pleasures and pretty soon they'll be your advocate too!

Where to find more information about backyard chickens:

- The Eugene Backyard Farmer, 501 Washington, Eugene
- Local feed stores in the spring, and at the Lane County Fair in the summer.
- Online information can be found as well at <http://www.backyardchickens.com>.

General Chicken Care:

- **Chicken Coops** - A good rule of thumb is about 2-3 square feet per chicken inside the henhouse and 4-5 sq/ft per chicken in an outside run. Raccoons and stray dogs are the main predators around the Eugene area—use chicken wire to securely cover any openings and make sure the chickens are all secured in their coops when darkness falls.
- **Coop Bedding** - You can use straw, pine shavings, leaves, sawdust and wood chips. Start out with a 4 to 6-inch layer of bedding. Coop bedding is usually replaced annually, with weekly management of soiled areas. Manage litter (the bedding and manure that builds up in the hen house) by composting it on site, work it into your garden beds (best done in the fall for spring planting), or take it to a composting facility. Do not put manure in yard debris carts. Managing manure properly is important for flock health, fly control, and environmental health.



- **Food & Water** - Most people go with chicken layer feed / pellets. It is critical that chickens always have fresh water available.
- **Supplements:** Grit to aid digestion and crushed oyster shell to promote egg production.
- **Treats** – Vegetables and fruit, bread, bugs, slugs, cracked corn, “hen scratch”, vegetable trim and plate scrapings (moderate amounts only).
- **Chickens and other pets** - Chickens are generally fine around cats after they are a couple of months old. Most dogs will need to be trained not to chase or kill chickens.
- **Extreme temperatures** - Surprisingly, chickens are more bothered by the heat than the cold. Make sure to provide shade and a good supply of water when temps get above the 80s.
- **Disease and Death** – If your chickens are given adequate space and forage, disease is rarely an issue. Chickens love to take ‘dust baths’ and this reduces mite problems. Always wash your hands after handling eggs, baby chicks, adult chickens, or cleaning your coop.



City of Eugene **Waste Prevention & Green Building Program**

Promoting sustainable practices in waste prevention and the built environment